

benefit. We will construct a fairer, consumer-oriented and better managed system for seniors to receive health care.

Mr. Speaker, a prescription drug benefit is the next logical step in the construction of an improved Medicare system for our seniors. Not only will we incorporate a prescription drug benefit, but we will work to ensure the solvency of the Medicare system for future generations.

I call on my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to come together in the spirit of bipartisanship, work together to pass meaningful reform to Medicare now, and to provide a prescription drug benefit for our seniors.

AMERICORP MUST BE PRESERVED

(Ms. LOFGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, the President, in the State of the Union in 2002 vowed to increase opportunities in AmeriCorp, and he went all over the United States saying that he would increase AmeriCorp by 50 percent, from about 50,000 members to 75,000.

However, this program is being destroyed. It has not been funded, the GAO has caused problems, we have not funded the scholarship program, and, in fact, the President's request for fiscal year 2004 actually asked for \$40 million less in AmeriCorp grants than he requested in 2003.

In San Jose, California, AmeriCorp volunteers are helping young students with tutoring, recycling, doing volunteerism and really making our community better.

So I am here today to say the President did not tell the truth to the American people in the State of the Union. He lied to the American people around the country when he promised to expand this program.

Please, Mr. President, let us come forward—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMONS). The gentlewoman is not in order. She must refrain from personal criticism of the President.

Ms. LOFGREN. I would hope the President would take steps to make sure that what he promised the American people actually comes true, instead of the sad state of deception that exists today.

SUPPORT HEALTH ACCESS AND FLEXIBILITY ACT

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about H.R. 2114, the Health Access and Flexibility Act.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, will increase access to consumer-based health cov-

erage for all Americans, regardless of income. Under H.R. 2114, the availability of Medical Savings Accounts will be greatly expanded and it will create similar types of accounts for low-income Americans.

Since the mid-1990s, Medical Savings Accounts have allowed their owners to purchase health services tax free by building funds in interest earning accounts. Medical Savings Accounts promote savings and direct health care purchasing and are designed to simplify the doctor-patient relationship.

As a physician, I know firsthand the difficulty that some patients have working through their insurance companies and what services are covered by their policies. With Medical Savings Accounts, patients can focus their attention on their medical care and they can discuss their needs with their doctors frankly and honestly, and they can proceed with appropriate treatment when medical care is necessary.

Unfortunately, these innovative savings tools are severely restricted and there have been caps placed on the number of the Medical Savings Accounts established in any given year.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ACT OF 2003

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am proud of President Bush for making positive change in our education system through the landmark No Child Left Behind legislation, which was championed by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce in the House.

To promote this Act, we need to help disadvantaged school districts in our country, which are struggling hard to compete for high quality teachers in the basic skills. That is why I have introduced the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act of 2003, which passed the Committee on Education and the Workforce last week.

This bill will attract highly qualified teachers to low income and rural areas by expanding the teacher loan forgiveness program from the current \$5,000 to a maximum of \$17,500 for teachers who commit to teaching math, science or special-ed in a disadvantaged district for 5 years. The goal is to ensure that America's children are prepared to succeed in a world based on science and technology.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring H.R. 438.

In conclusion, God bless our troops.

TRIBUTE TO BILL MAYS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is not often that we come

to the floor to speak of a special person, and, when we do so, I hope that it is understood that whatever their contribution, they have had an impact on our lives.

I speak this morning about Bill Mays. Many of you would not be familiar with that name. Bill Mays was an employee of this House. In fact, he worked in the Rayburn Building, where many of us have our offices, and he served us in providing service through the elevator system.

Bill Mays was someone who we saw every day as we rushed to the floor of the House, a very generous and kind person, a very calm person, always with a smile on his face. Just a few months ago, he lost his wife after her long battle with cancer. We always heard of how they were working with each other to keep each other supported. And, just last week, not more than 3 months after her death, Bill Mays had a heart attack.

We want to pay tribute to Bill, because many times our good friends who work in this building go unnoticed. But we just want to simply say we appreciated you, Bill. Our sympathy to Annette, your daughter, and her family.

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As I close on that note in thanking him, I would just simply say, Mr. Speaker, it is also time to tell the American people the truth about the weapons of mass destruction. So I will be filing legislation for an independent commission and a special prosecutor to be able to know what truth was known, what truth was said, and whether we as policymakers, who are obligated to the American people to be truthful as we take our oath of office, that we are always with the truth, to be able to tell the truth.

CONSULAR CARDS THREATEN HOMELAND SECURITY

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today the Subcommittee on Immigration will hold a hearing on consular identification cards such as those issued by Mexican consulates to illegal immigrants in the United States.

A number of cities and dozens of banks now recognize these cards for identification purposes. In several States, in fact, they can be used to obtain a driver's license.

The cards are not reliable, not secure, and make it easier for illegal immigrants to stay in the U.S. A person's identity is not verified and false identities are easy to obtain. To anyone worried about homeland security, these cards should be seen as a red alert.

The Treasury Department recently approved these consular identification cards for bank use, yet no major bank in Mexico accepts them. So we have U.S. banks relying on Mexican identification cards that even Mexico will not recognize.